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ABSTRACT

If an institution of higher education is to function, it is necessary that all components--trustees, administration, faculty, and students--fulfill their individual responsibilities. However, students cannot fulfill their responsibilities for self-development unless they are allowed certain rights and freedoms. Any college or university can benefit from the talents of its students. To facilitate their involvement, institutions should: 1) provide for more information exchange; 2) consult with students; and 3) give students decision-making responsibility in many areas of university life and complete responsibility for some areas of student life. As "consumers" of institutional services, students should be heard on all academic matters that concern them. The proper student role in non-academic life is difficult to discover, but a good beginning can be made in intensive cooperative study--such as that at Brown University and Pembroke College. A great deal of misunderstanding between students and the local community might be avoided by instituting channels of communication. Students have valid complaints about the conditions of the country and should not hesitate to offer considered approaches to solving our problems. There is no group better qualified to improve the colleges and universities than the students in them. (DS)

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A SYMPOSIUM

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENT

by Louis Joughin

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE LOS ANGELES
May 21–22, 1968

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THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENT

An Address by
Dr. Louis Joughin
Associate Secretary
American Association of University Professors

at the Symposium on
Academic Freedom and Responsibility

May 22, 1968

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE
LOS ANGELES

The Symposium on Academic Freedom and Responsibility

May 21–22, 1968

Today we are confronted with many troubling questions relating to academic freedom, due process, and the roles of students as well as faculty in the governance of our colleges and universities. Recent events have challenged traditional patterns and practices. It is clear that every responsible person in the academic community *must* take time to consider what in his own view should be preserved and what discarded, for we are in serious danger of having these issues decided for us by others if we cannot settle them ourselves.

The purpose of this Symposium was to provide an opportunity for a searching discussion of major issues relating to academic freedom and responsibility, with particular attention to the role of the student. Those attending included students and faculty of various colleges and universities in Southern California, as well as the general public.

The program included major presentations by distinguished authorities, critiques by faculty and students, and panel sessions. Co-sponsors with California State College, Los Angeles were the Associated Students of Cal State LA, and the campus chapter of the American Association of University Professors. The national AAUP and its regional office provided additional support without which the Symposium could not have been presented.

The address which is reproduced on the following pages was the highlight of the opening session on May 22.

About the Speaker

Louis Joughin, Associate Secretary, American Association of University Professors, joined the Washington Office in 1958.

From 1930 to 1954 he taught literature at Harvard, The University of Texas, the New School for Social Research, Sarah Lawrence, Brooklyn College and C.C.N.Y. From 1955 to 1957 he offered a course in American social history at Columbia.

Dr. Joughin served as assistant director of the American Civil Liberties Union from 1955 to 1958. Earlier, in 1946, he became a member of that organization's Academic Freedom Committee; he was that group's executive officer from 1951 to 1958.

He is the author of *The Legacy of Sacco and Vanzetti* (with E. M. Morgan), *Tenure in American Higher Education* (with Clark Byse), and other books, articles and reviews. He is the editor of the *AAUP Handbook on Academic Freedom and Tenure* published in 1967 by the University of Wisconsin Press.

Dr. Joughin served four years as the chairman of the Faculty Committee on Student Discipline at the University of Texas, and he is the principal author of the "grandfather" document on student rights, *Academic Freedom and Civil Liberties of Students,* published in 1956 by the American Civil Liberties Union.

I. *The Work of the Institution of Higher Education and the Functions of Its Four Components*

The work of an institution of higher education embraces (1) the mastery of existing knowledge, (2) the discarding of knowledge which has been proved wrong or useless, (3) the creation, when possible, of new knowledge, (4) the recognition of new problems and engagement with them, even when no solution is apparent, and (5) the general education of the people and the specialized education of the next generation of experts. An operation of this scope calls for almost unlimited resources in material and human energy. When all this effort and hope is brought to a point of focus there exists an instrument of tremendous power, and also of tremendous sensitivity and delicacy of adjustment. And it is quite obvious that this instrument, the institution, can easily be stopped cold, or even destroyed, by forces against which it has no innate defense. Fortunately, there are external systems of defense, such as the good will of the local and national community. This protection can be obtained, but at a price—such as having one's house in order. And that is one reason why it is important to talk about the role of the student in institutional government.

There are four customary components in an institution of higher education, and each has its function. It is the business of the trustee to see that sanity, honesty, and efficiency are observed. He is also charged with presenting the institution's claims upon every known treasury, and in times of attack upon academic freedom it is the trustee's duty to defend his institution and its people. We know what the administration does. It leads, it receives the ultimate "buck," it takes credit for those things which it has not done and receives blame for those things which it has not done. As for the faculty, we all know about the function it performs, sometimes badly, sometimes well. As for the student, his function is to acquire information, to develop his powers of body, mind, and feeling, and to know himself.

A last introductory metaphor. A college or university has a corporate unity not unlike our individual human organisms. Let it never be forgotten that one member can kill the whole. With my hand I can destroy my life. With my closed eyes I can walk into death for all of me.

I now propose to explore with you five topics relating to the role of the student in college or university government:

- The Rights and Freedoms of Students
- The Kinds of Student Involvement in Government
- The Student Role in Institutional Academic Government
- The Student Role in Institutional Non-Academic Government
- The Student and the Civil Community

II. *The Rights and Freedoms of Students*

The American Association of University Professors, the Association of American Colleges which represents the administrators, and the U.S. National Student Association have approved a 1968 *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students** which defines what may rightly be called inalienable student rights. I respect this document if for no other reason than the fact that I was the chief author of *Academic Freedom and Civil Liberties of Students,* published by the American Civil Liberties Union in 1956, the grandfather statement in this area. Hopefully, the 1968 Statement will further guide and perhaps control judgments in numerous cases where injustice threatens. But it cannot be expected to do more than the United States Constitution, or to surmount the inherent limitation of any Bill of Rights. It cannot enforce itself. We will do well to remember that from September of '61 to the Spring of '65 more than 30,000 citizens of the United States were jailed and denied that most basic of all rights, the writ of *habeas corpus,* and that the officers of the federal government summarily seized and closed down dozens of newspapers and publishing houses. The few victims who went to court got little satisfaction; the executive branch of our government would on occasion not answer, and sometimes not even receive in its hands the writ of the Supreme Court of the United States. The rights of citizens under the Constitution were for all practical purposes completely subordinated to the will of the state to survive, at least from 1861 to 1865 under Abraham Lincoln.

A statement of rights is the fine flower of civilization in the field of law. We should promulgate it and we should fight for it. At the same time, we must recognize that the practical business of successfully exercising one's right is another matter; it is often most successfully conducted without fanfare under carefully established procedures. Thus with respect to the right which concerns us today, it may be necessary at some times and some places to fight for it, especially if it is denied on principle. But with respect to its practice I suggest that we all join in a conspiracy of reason. I recommend that we proceed upon the major premise that any college or university, in numerous areas of its government, can benefit by utilizing the experience, judgment, and imagination of its students.

III. *The Kinds of Student Involvement in Government*

First, there is an obvious need for a vastly enlarged exchange of information and opinion. Very, very few institutions in this country systematically make available to their student bodies information which the students have a right to have, and, more importantly, have a capacity to use competently for the good of the institution. Virtually no institution regularly sounds out student opinion, systematically and comprehensively. It is a nice question whether the situation is more ludicrous or more monstrous, in a day when the generation gap is not between physical youth and physical maturity but between the live men who are still

* The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and National Association of Women Deans and Counselors joined the AAUP, AAC, and USNSA in the original drafting of the statement. Since that formulation, five additional professional bodies have endorsed it.

actively inquiring and the walking corpses whose stock of information is all of ten years old. Administration, faculty, and students should proceed forthwith to the establishing of a permanent and fully adequate system for the giving and receiving of information.

Second, students should be consulted. Their considered views should be had on matters subject to analysis. Their visceral reactions should be sought on matters where no one has got much beyond expressing his feelings; the visceral responses of the students are as important as those of the faculty member or administrator, and probably less sluggish. There should be student membership without vote on committees, task forces, and liaison agencies at all levels—departmental, college-wide, university-wide. At that hotbed of radicalism, the University of Kentucky, the two faculty members on the Board of Trustees have just been joined by a non-voting student member. Promptly, institutions should examine their structure for operations and decision-making to determine at what points student opinion would serve as a useful resource.

Third, there exist numerous situations and operations where students should bear the responsibility of decisions. I recommend careful study of the Foote-Mayer report published at Berkeley in January, 1968. I recommend study of the Canadian situation where one-third of the academic senates have student members, and I believe that some have a vote. I particularly recommend the procedure recommended at the University of Wisconsin by an *ad hoc* committee on the role of students in the government of the university which places heavy emphasis upon the voting participation of students in departmental business. The committee also urges that, at the highest faculty level, in the Senate, students shall have the right to place matters upon the agenda, and that the faculty must act thereon.

Fourth, there is the area of exclusive decision where only the students decide. I think this area will always remain relatively narrow, simply because the operations of an institution of higher education are so complex that any single element of the community is seldom likely to have the only voice. But a review should be made, particularly to determine whether there are areas of student life which neither governing board, administration, faculty, or student body has any right at all to control, areas of private life which are not academic nor even of institutional concern.

There is no magic or novelty in these proposals. They are simply a logical extension to student affairs of the principles of functional relevance which dominate the whole of the 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,* and which the Board of Trustees of the California State Colleges has adopted as its guidance statement for the development of institutional governance. I reveal no secret when I say that I hope something like the ideas here set forth will soon be presented to American higher education as proposed general policy.

Now let us turn to specific areas and levels of government.

IV. *The Student Role in Institutional Academic Government*

Students are the immediate consumers of the instructional offering and there is no reason why they should not have full information about the considerations which have led to the stocking of the shelves. Furthermore, they should be heard on the question of national brands as against local brands, and about the proportion which should exist between utility grade packs and prime quality packs. Students should be heard about curriculum. Of perhaps even greater importance, they should be heard about the general structure of degree programs; they are the individuals who will soon discover whether their degree brings them more or less recognition in the money market, or in graduate school acceptances, or in personal competence, or in a private sense of beginning wisdom.

Should students have a vote when they sit with departmental and college curriculum and program committees? Here, I believe, is a prime

instance of a question which should be answered in terms of functional utility rather than of absolute right. If the students lack experience, cannot understand the nature of the situation, and are generally confused, it seems clear that they should not vote. Incidentally, I have enough faith in students to believe that under such circumstances they would not use their vote even if so endowed. But if the students demonstrate capacity for informed judgment, it would be folly to reject their help. This is no mystery. Every father of a son and mother of a daughter experiences that wonderful moment when the nice little kid who tried to help but got in the way suddenly stands revealed as a capable partner for some job within the family economy. I need hardly add that this is the point at which respect and affection take big forward steps.

Students are also consumers of staff services. There should be procedures whereby they may responsibly indicate their preferences and judgments about their teachers. It is true that some faculty members may fear that student judgments will exaggerate the importance of popularity or easy grades. But effective safeguards are available. The only really likely embarrassment is the disclosure of deficiencies to which too many people have closed their eyes.

There is also the matter of academic environment; the places and times for doing things. It is true that state finance officers have a duty to get the best possible return from physical facilities—even to the point of scheduling five quarters in the year. Similarly, the faculty member should be heard about his need for time to engage in concentrated research or to recoup his strength. Students are also human beings; they have their aspirations and their limits of strength. I think they should have a vote on questions of schedule and, as the immediate sufferers of the act of education, they might even have something like a powerful voice. Likewise, students should participate in decisions regarding class sizes, room assignments, hours of meeting, and the like.

V. *The Student Role in Institutional Non-Academic Government*

Students who attend an institution of higher education on a daily basis, or even live together on a campus, confront a disheartening paradox. They have been taught in school that they are beginning citizens on the threshold of full responsibility, and that they should begin to practice democratic processes. This they try to do, but all too frequently they are immediately confronted by suspicion, active distrust, and rules more suited to a kiddies' sandbox than to a gathering of vigorous and intelligent young people of high aptitude and recognized promise. They may hear speakers of their choice—provided the community approves. They may establish their own domestic regulations—provided they conform to a Puritan mystique. And so almost at once there is friction and explosion.

There is, however, another side to the question. Each of us has his rights, and in a sensible community the individual is given protection against all kinds of tyranny. Here, in my opinion, is where students are currently failing rather badly. In numerous instances involving both academic and non-academic institutional matters, they have developed and applied their own special kinds of tyranny—tyranny by a democratic majority upon the proper freedom of the individual, tyranny by minority imposed upon the helplessness of the many who believe in tolerance. It is a source of grief that the Council of the American Association of University Professors has been obliged in a recent resolution to defend the principle of academic freedom against attacks made by students. I shall have more to say about these questions later, but they certainly arise most often in matters of student life.

The answer may not be easy to come by, and some problems may never be solved; they will just have to go away with time. However, a good beginning can be made by intensive cooperative study. I am particularly impressed by the work that was done at Brown University and its Pem-

broke College for women. A questionnaire was sent to students, the parents of students, and the alumni of the institutions. Thousands of answers were received; the sense of the community was established. The rules which have been proposed offer full freedom up to the point where it is apparent that there is clearly strong desire for regulation. Most of the restrictions are very modest; for example, a reasonable curfew on freshman girls, a greatly relaxed check-in hour for sophomore girls, and for all practical purposes little beyond these limits. The basis for the dormitory rules was sensible and practical; it was clear that the community did not wish young girls to be unnecessarily exposed to situations which could result in unwanted pregnancies or in forcible sexual assault. Significantly, no value judgment is offered. Only protection. This makes sense, if Brown is to stay in business with girl students whose bills are paid by their parents.

Before leaving the question of the student role in the non-academic institutional area, I venture to suggest a way to lessen friction between the advocates of total campus freedom and those determined to have the institution serve as a training school in traditional morality. Simply this: a shift in the grounds of argument. Less emphasis upon the rights which attach to student status, and a stronger affirmation of the rights of all of us as individuals to be left alone most of the time. Of course the principle embodied in this view will have to be taken seriously by everyone, including students.

VI. *The Student and the Civil Community*

At the time these words are uttered all of us are unhappy and fearful because of the hostility which has developed between important student groups and the civic leadership of the communities in which our institutions are located. I ask you to use your imagination, if for no more than a moment of discussion, and to return to a mood in which differences can be explored without resort into frenzy. I ask this because I think I have something rather novel to propose, and your thoughtful criticism will be much appreciated.

Would it not be helpful if the leaders of a community, particularly its regular governing body, were to inform student leaders in the community about existing and proposed regulations which affect the student enclave, and about emergency problems and the ways in which it is proposed to solve them? Similarly, would it not be helpful if civic leaders were informed about developments on the campus which could be expected to affect the general community? Operating machinery would not be difficult to devise. Let us say that in Portland, Maine, or Bloomington, Indiana there is a weekly meeting of the mayor's cabinet, or of the executive committee of the City Council; the police and fire chiefs attend as resource persons, as does the administrative officer of the local courts. A lot of informal talk occurs and some of it may be sensible. Would the world really come to an end if one or more representatives of the local student population were to be present, to hear, to speak, and to help by responsible comment? Similarly, why should not the weekly meeting of the Student Council, with the campus newspaper editor and others present, have the benefit of participation by a well-disposed representative of the community government? These proposals seem to me to be so sensible that any objection, from either civic or campus groups, would lead me to suspect that someone had something to hide—perhaps his sense of demagogic privilege.

I would like to see the president of the student body and the head of the community government discuss ways and means for the common enlightenment of their contiguous worlds. There is no iron law of nature which requires us never to talk to anyone who has a partially different interest. And there is a very good law of probability that more good will comes from conversation than from the degeneracy of angry confrontation.

Up to the present, the student action crises reported around the country constitute a mixture of not too serious nonsense, expert malice, considerable harm, and potential danger of a high order. I cannot tell you what the outcome will be, because I feel that the student demonstrations are no more than a reflection of an illness of the nation. If we are all really sick, so will be the student involvement. If the United States merely has the nine-days itch, so will its students. The best I can do is to conclude by distinguishing sharply between the grounds of student unrest and their means of protest.

First of all it is evident that students have valid complaints about the world in which they already carry the burden of responsibility. In an age when young people of 18 are better educated than all but the intellectual elite of past generations, they are told to wait until they are 21 to vote; the pill is not made sweeter by the attendant privilege of having your head shot off. Or take the lower level question of simple honesty. Our students witness the almost daily spectacle of partial truth, selective truth, and cheap word play by too many leaders of community, state, and nation. Or take the matter of race. Students see the Black people of the United States driven to a suicidal position of self-isolation. Recently, the unemployment rate in this country dropped to its lowest figure in many years—but not for Black young men. Our students are ashamed of their country's failure. The rest of us have no right to rebuke them: the students are bearing a witness to truth.

The choice of an approach to the great problems of the day is another matter. And here I believe that some students, particularly those given to destruction and to academic insurrection, have chosen the wrong path. They are prepared to destroy and they expect to gain a hearing by instilling fear. Well, destruction aside, what disturbs me mightily is that when I listen for their answers to our problems I hear nothing. Hundreds of pages of the literature of the new student left has passed across my desk. Much of it is incomprehensible in any language. Much of it is a sentimental stew of Communism, anarchism, and nihilism that would make any really professional revolutionary look elsewhere for recruits. About the only use it has is to enrage the political rednecks of the country. And that will get none of us anywhere.

I urge the student leaders of the colleges and institutions of the United States to reassess the situation. The entrenched power of the civil order, and the military order, is not afraid of picketing and of building seizures. But it is afraid, in fact scared to death, of your intelligence, your wit, your justified scorn, and of the fact that even the youngest of you will within three or four years be ready to administer the authority of the vote. Do not be afraid to offer specific solutions for social and political problems; however odd they may be, they could not be worse than those tried so far.

Now, to return to today's topic, the role of the student in the government of the institution of higher education. I believe it likely that a friendly but firm presentation of your thoughtful wishes will in most places meet with consideration, much yielding, and large acceptance. At the few institutions where you are refused, you are likely to find yourself in the company of a scorned faculty, an outraged AAUP, and the prospect of quick institutional collapse, to the grief of no one. But where you do succeed, where you become members of the only Establishment that counts, the society of reasonable men and women, you will be able to set up procedures that will enhance your self-respect and give you many of the elements which you properly desire in an academic community. These will mark important advances, and yet everything you will gain will be less than the sum of what you will be in a position to give. American higher education, with all of its substantive accomplishment, needs a prompt and thorough overhaul of its operating machinery. I do not know any group in society better qualified to participate in the process of updating our colleges and universities than the students in them.

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